

Increased polar stratospheric ozone losses and delayed eventual recovery owing to increasing greenhouse-gas concentrations

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The chemical reactions responsible for stratospheric ozone depletion are extremely sensitive to temperature¹. Greenhouse gases warm the Earth's surface but cool the stratosphere radiatively²⁻⁵ and therefore affect ozone depletion. Here we investigate the interplay between coupled projected future emissions of greenhouse gases and levels of ozone-depleting halogen species using a global climate model that incorporates simplified ozone-depletion chemistry. Temperature and wind changes induced by the increasing greenhouse-gas concentrations alter planetary-wave propagation in our model, reducing the frequency of sudden stratospheric warmings in the Northern Hemisphere⁴. This results in a more stable Arctic polar vortex, with significantly colder temperatures in the lower stratosphere and concomitantly increased ozone depletion. Increased concentrations of greenhouse gases might therefore be at least partly responsible for the very large Arctic ozone losses observed in recent winters⁶⁻⁹. Arctic losses reach a maximum in the decade 2010 to 2019 in our model, roughly a decade after the maximum in stratospheric chlorine abundance. The mean losses are about the same as those over the Antarctic during the early 1990s, with geographically localized losses of up to two-thirds of the Arctic ozone column in the worst years. The severity and the duration of the Antarctic ozone hole are also predicted to increase because of greenhouse-gas-induced stratospheric cooling over the coming decades.

Parameterized chemistry was included interactively in the Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) Global Climate/Middle Atmosphere Model (GCMAM)¹⁰, a primitive equation model including parameterized gravity waves. This model has $8^\circ \times 10^\circ$ resolution (latitude \times longitude), with 23 vertical layers extending from the surface to 85 km. Mountain wave drag was reduced globally to one-quarter its usual value¹¹ to allow realistic simulation of Southern Hemisphere polar lower stratospheric temperatures, which were otherwise too warm. Modeled ozone transport was fixed at climatological values. This includes only zonal mean motions, so that we may underestimate the amount of chemical processing by longitudinally asymmetric motion of air across low temperature regions. Ozone transport changes induced by increasing greenhouse gases were calculated non-interactively. We performed a control run without greenhouse gas

forcing, and a run with forcings (Fig. 1), each including the chlorine loading trend^{1,12,13}. Both began in 1959, allowing time for removal of any influence of initial conditions, and continued to the end of 2070. The atmosphere was coupled to a mixed layer ocean with specified ocean heat transports and diffusion through the base of the mixed layer, allowing sea surface temperatures to respond to greenhouse forcings⁴.

A simple, but physically realistic parameterization of the heterogeneous chemistry responsible for polar ozone depletion was used^{11,14}. Computational resources prohibit the use of more complex chemistry. Briefly, chlorine activation takes place whenever temperatures fall below 195 K, a rough threshold for formation of polar stratospheric cloud or supercooled sulfate aerosol, as observations and detailed photochemical calculations show rapid activation below this temperature regardless of phase and composition details of heterogeneous surfaces^{15,16}. Ozone depletion takes place at each location with active chlorine and sunlight according to photochemistry and temperature¹⁷. An additional contribution of 15% from bromine chemistry is also included. This parameterization reproduces quite well observed global chlorine monoxide abundances¹⁸ and polar ozone losses¹¹, and has been used in previous studies of ozone response to climate change¹⁴. Other models using crude heterogeneous chemistry parameterizations have also obtained reasonable results for global-scale ozone loss¹⁹⁻²¹. We note that should massive denitrification occur in the Arctic, ozone loss could be extended even beyond that modeled here.

Radiative cooling by increasing greenhouse gases by itself causes area-weighted temperature decreases of ~1-2 K poleward of 70° from altitudes of 200 to 50 mb during 2010-2019 in the winter in both hemispheres, relative to the control run. In the Northern Hemisphere, the reduced frequency of stratospheric warmings adds to the radiative cooling, resulting in total temperature decreases within the enhanced Arctic vortex of 5-7 K during December and January. Large ozone losses in February and March exert a sizeable positive feedback, so that modeled temperatures are 8-10 K colder in the greenhouse run owing to combined radiative, dynamical, and chemical influences.

In the Southern Hemisphere, the radiative cooling and the resulting positive feedback from increased chemical ozone loss lead to more persistent extremely cold temperatures. Although an Antarctic ozone hole occurs in the control run, November and December are 4 K colder during 2010-2019 in the run with increasing greenhouse gases, prolonging the duration of the ozone hole. (The 1990s Antarctic ozone hole itself induced lower stratospheric cooling of ~6 K in October, and ~8 K in November in the model¹¹, in good agreement with observations.) Total modeled cooling relative to pre-ozone-hole conditions in the 2010s is ~7 K in October, and ~12 K in November, similar to the Arctic values.

Figure 2 shows that Arctic ozone losses are greatest in the 2010s, while during the late 1990s and early 2000s they are similar in percentage to Antarctic losses observed in the late 1980s. Without climate forcing, average ozone destruction

would only change within the model as a result of changes in chlorine amounts. Chlorine abundance in the 2010s is similar to 1990s levels, so that the much greater mean Arctic ozone loss in the 2010s displays the distinct signature of stratospheric cooling induced by increasing greenhouse gases. Greenhouse-gas-induced lower-stratospheric cooling also causes the Antarctic ozone hole to expand vertically and horizontally relative to its current state, as seen in equilibrium doubled CO₂ experiments^{11,19}. As ozone depletion is already very large, additional destruction over that seen in the current decade is fairly small. Recovery of ozone to early 1980s levels does not take place until roughly 2050.

Antarctic ozone depletion is up to 50-60% of the column during 2010-2019, and roughly symmetric around the South Pole (Fig. 3). Though interannual variability remains large, over 50% of the ozone column is also frequently destroyed over a large area of the Arctic. The total amount of ozone destroyed in the Arctic during this decade is ~85% of Antarctic destruction during the same decade. Over Greenland and Northern Europe however, more ozone is destroyed than anywhere within the Antarctic ozone hole.

In Fig. 4 we compare observed and modeled Antarctic and Arctic ozone column minima. Within the large variability, the model reproduces well the decreasing values seen in the 1990s in both hemispheres. The most severe Arctic depletions are seen during 2006-2021, when column minima drop below 150 Dobson units (DU) during four of the coldest, most stable years.

Ozone transport differences between the control and experimental runs were calculated non-interactively¹⁴. The stronger Arctic polar vortex slows meridional transport across the vortex boundary, leading to a slight ozone buildup outside the vortex, with associated slight ozone decreases within the vortex. Additionally, increased residual circulation brings down more ozone into the highest altitudes where ozone depletion occurs. These effects change ozone amounts by less than 8% at any point during 2010-2019; a small value relative to chemical losses. Southern Hemisphere changes are even smaller. In contrast, altered transports in an equilibrium doubled-CO₂ experiment with the GISS model changed Arctic ozone amounts by more than 25% (ref. 14), so the importance of transport changes is likely to increase significantly towards the middle of the next century.

Whereas climate models are fairly consistent in generating lower-stratospheric radiative cooling in response to increasing greenhouse gases, changes in planetary-wave energy propagation may be much more model-dependent. These experiments show that Arctic ozone loss is extremely sensitive to a reduction in the frequency of sudden stratospheric warmings, agreeing with earlier work demonstrating that the presence, or lack of, mid-winter sudden stratospheric warming is the crucial factor in determining whether an Arctic ozone hole will form under doubled CO₂ conditions^{22,23}.

The GISS model generates a large tropical upper-tropospheric warming in response to increasing greenhouse gases: 10 K in the doubled-CO₂ experiments, 3 K during the 2010s in these experiments. This warming increases the latitudinal

temperature gradient over the altitude range ~600-100 mb, causing the lower-stratospheric (300-10 mb) zonal winds at 40-50° N during December-February to speed up by 9-11 m s⁻¹ for doubled CO₂, and 3-5 m s⁻¹ during the 2010s in these experiments, relative to the control runs. Faster winds alter the refraction of planetary waves, limiting the ability of wave number two (Planetary wave n is the wave with n nodes) to propagate up into the stratosphere⁴. Sudden warmings in our model are typically triggered by a combination of waves one and two, especially major warmings (as has often been observed²⁴). The net result is a reduction in the frequency of stratospheric warmings despite an enhancement of wave one. This mechanism therefore depends upon the degree of tropical upper-tropospheric warming due to increased CO₂ generated by a particular model. We note that another GISS model with 31 vertical layers and 4° × 5° resolution produces a similar upper-tropospheric warming, as does the 23-layer model with standard mountain drag, suggesting that this response is not very sensitive to model resolution or mountain drag. While models such as the UK Meteorological Office model generate upper-tropospheric warmings similar to those of the GISS model, others (such as the models of the Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory or the National Center for Atmospheric Research) do not²⁵. The Météo-France group performed an experiment using prescribed temperature changes in response to CO₂ increases as calculated in the Hamburg model, which gave a weaker temperature response than is typical²⁵. Though they did not calculate polar ozone loss, they found an increase in sudden stratospheric warmings with a doubling of atmospheric carbon dioxide⁵.

In support of the GISS model, observations generally agree with the trends seen in our simulations. The winter-time Arctic vortex area with temperatures below 195 K has increased considerably over the past three decades²⁶, as have winter-time lower-stratospheric zonal winds²⁷. Recent Arctic winters have followed the trends in our model, showing large ozone losses and an increasingly stable and persistent polar vortex^{6-9,28}. In the first eight years of the 1990s, there has been only one Arctic major warming during December-February, as compared with five during the 1980s.

The model results are triggered by changes in the tropopause-region latitudinal temperature gradient. This gradient can be increased by both greenhouse warming and by high-latitude ozone loss (recent trends²⁶⁻²⁸ have probably been influenced by both). High-latitude ozone loss provides a positive feedback loop, creating nonlinear dynamical and ozone responses to climate forcing. Observations of the temporal evolution of the tropopause-region latitudinal temperature gradient are therefore crucial. Combined with measurements of the frequency of sudden stratospheric warmings, they may verify our modeled chemistry-climate linkage which creates a severe Arctic ozone hole.

Despite worldwide limits on chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) production implemented after the discovery of the ozone hole over Antarctica²⁹, uncertainties remain about the exact timing of ozone-hole recovery. Our results

suggest that increasing greenhouse gases may worsen the situation, leading to severe ozone depletion over the Arctic, as well as increasing the severity and duration of the Antarctic ozone hole. Furthermore, due to the influence of climate change, the maximum chemical depletion of polar ozone may occur roughly a decade after the maximum chlorine abundance in the stratosphere, and roughly 15 years after the decline in the emission of CFCs (recently observed in the troposphere for some compounds³⁰). Thus recovery of the Earth's ozone layer may take place later than currently expected.

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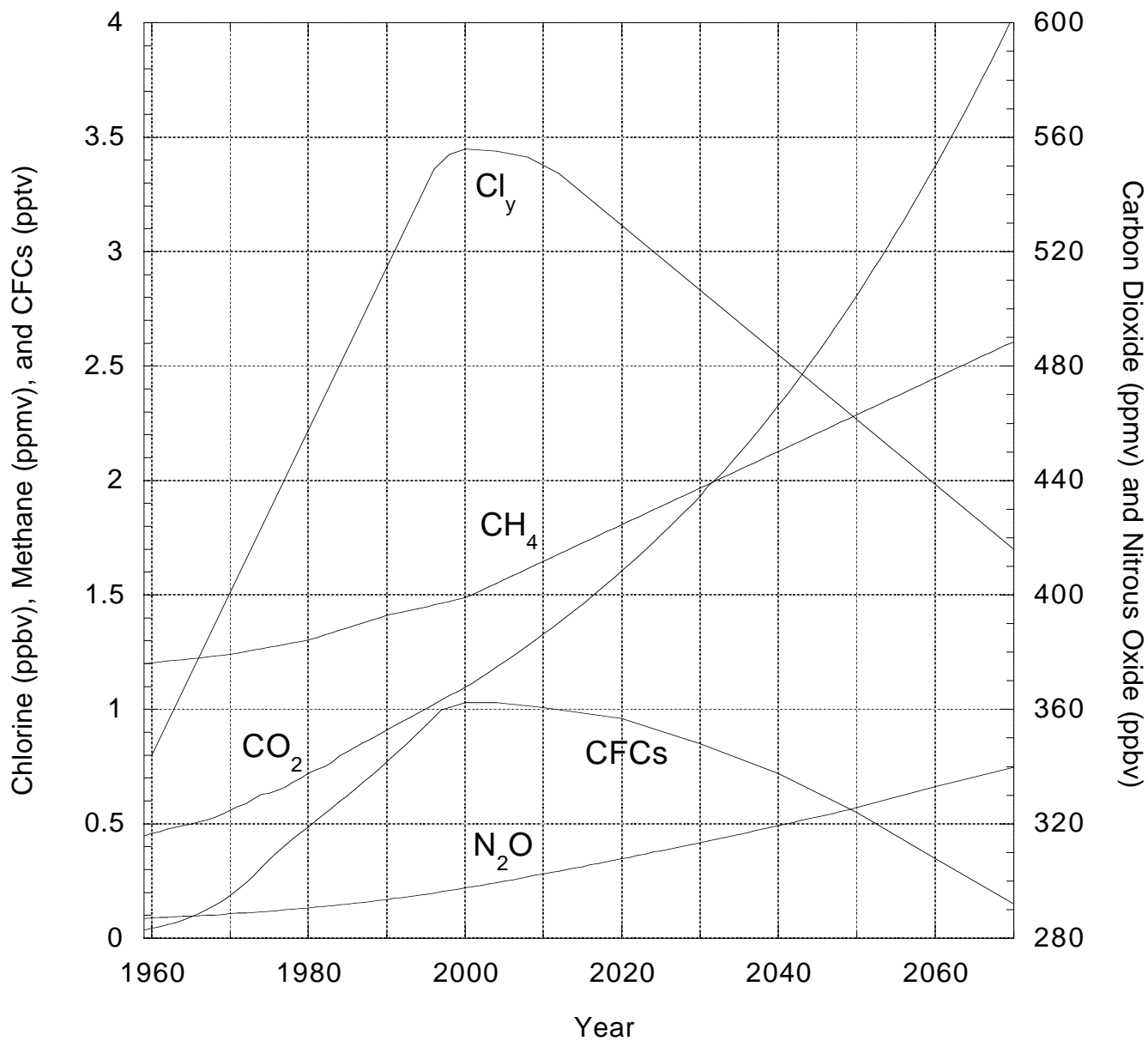
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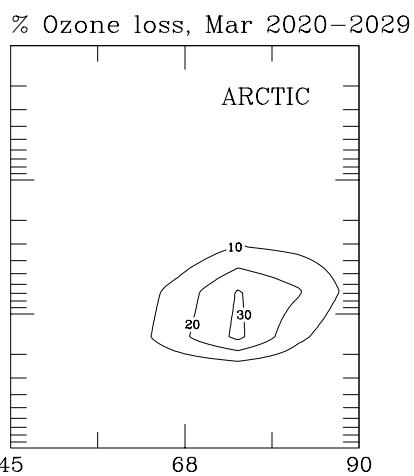
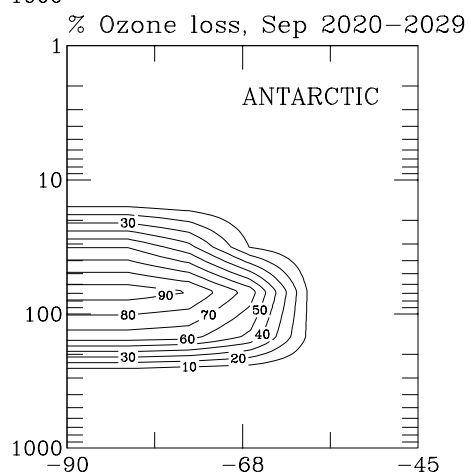
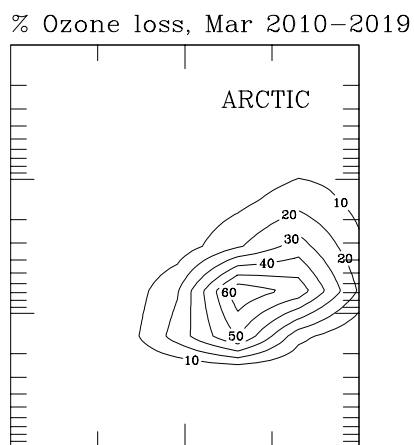
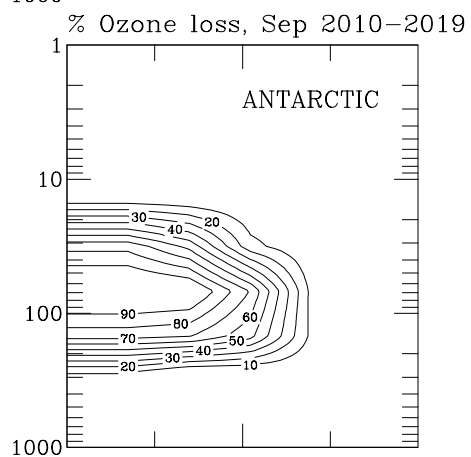
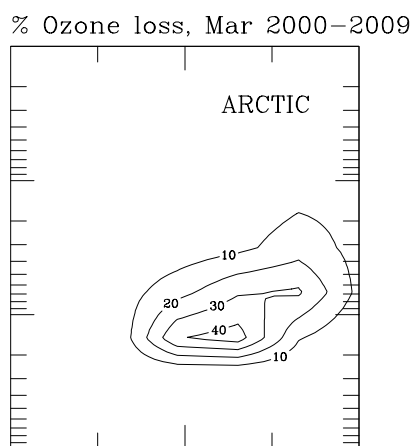
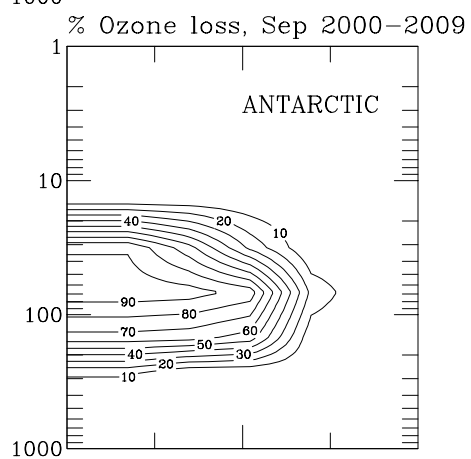
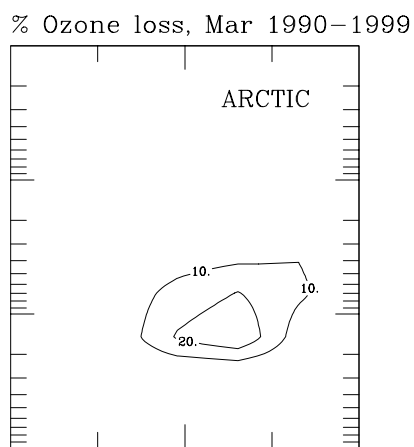
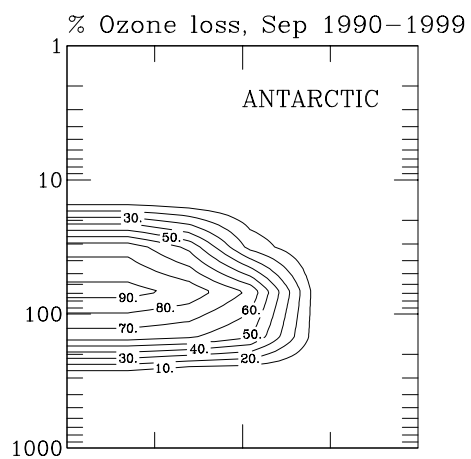
Figure 1 Input emission trends for CO₂, N₂O, CH₄, CFCs, and chlorine (Cl_y) used to the model runs. Projected lower stratospheric chlorine loading (independent of height or latitude) based on the trend derived from the 1992 Copenhagen revisions to the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer¹, normalized slightly upwards and decreasing more slowly in the future to match recent observations^{12,13,30}. Greenhouse gas emissions are based on observations through 1984, and subsequently are similar to, though for carbon dioxide slightly lower than, the 1992 International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) preferred scenario IS92a²⁵. The exception is CFCs, for which a steady reduction after 2000 has been assumed, consistent with their expected phase out and with the chlorine loading scenario.

Figure 2 Decadally averaged vertical profiles of zonal mean ozone losses during September for the Southern Hemisphere and during March for the Northern Hemisphere. Values are percentage depletion with respect to pre-1980 observed climatological ozone.

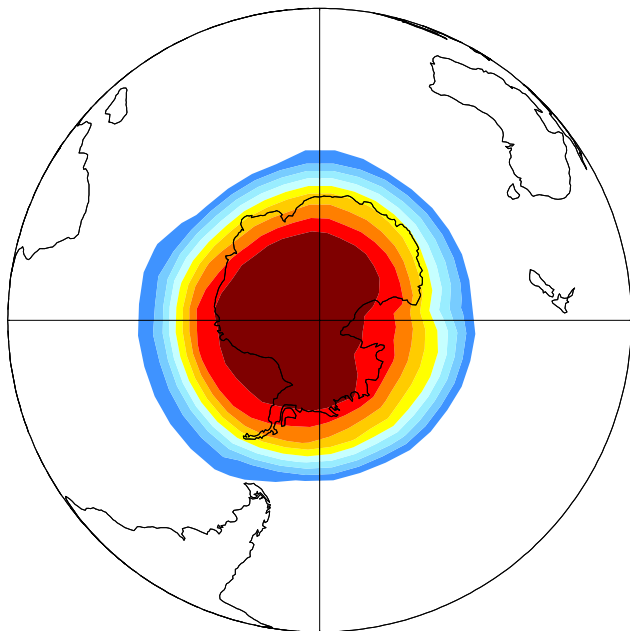
Figure 3 Total column ozone loss averaged over 2010-2019, during September for the Southern Hemisphere (top) and March for the Northern Hemisphere (bottom). The left-hand panels show the total column ozone loss in percent. In the Arctic, despite the enhanced polar vortex, decadal mean loss is very non-symmetric. The GISS GCMAM produces an Aleutian high-pressure region in good agreement with observations, resulting in colder temperatures on average from 90° W through 0° to 90° E. Average ozone losses are therefore greater in that region. As there is more springtime ozone in the Northern Hemisphere than in the Southern Hemisphere, in addition to showing the relative percentage losses, total column loss is also shown in Dobson units (DU; right-hand panels), indicating the absolute number of ozone molecules destroyed.

Figure 4 Total column ozone minima in the polar regions during spring. The top panel shows minimum ozone (DU) south of 65°, averaged over the last three days of September (except for 1993, for which 23-25 September was used), as seen in TOMS version 7 data (filled circles), and in the model (open circles). Similarly, the bottom panel shows minimum column ozone north of 65°, averaged over the last three days of March, as seen in TOMS data and in the model. Model values do not include intrusions of low-ozone air from lower latitudes into the Arctic, so they tend to be on the high side of observed values. The bar shown for 1996 is an estimate for that year derived from chemical column depletions of 120-160 DU with respect to a climatological mean of 435 DU, calculated based on Halogen Occultation Experiment observations⁷.



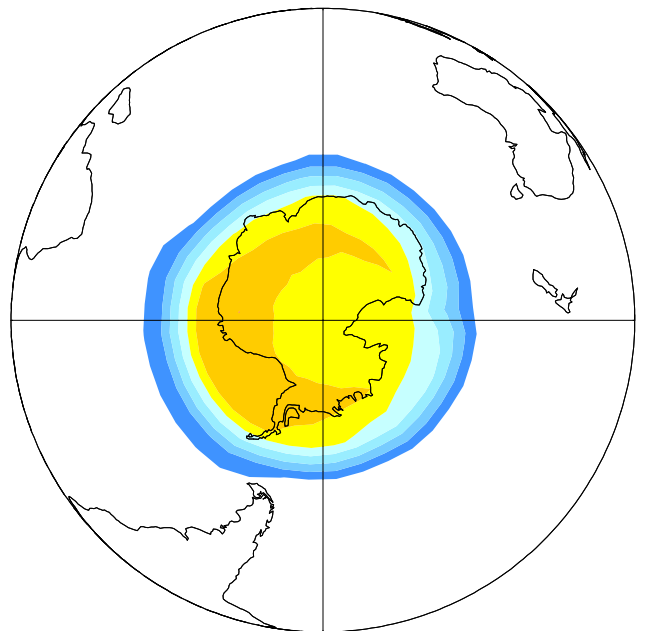


Ozone loss (%), September 2010–2019



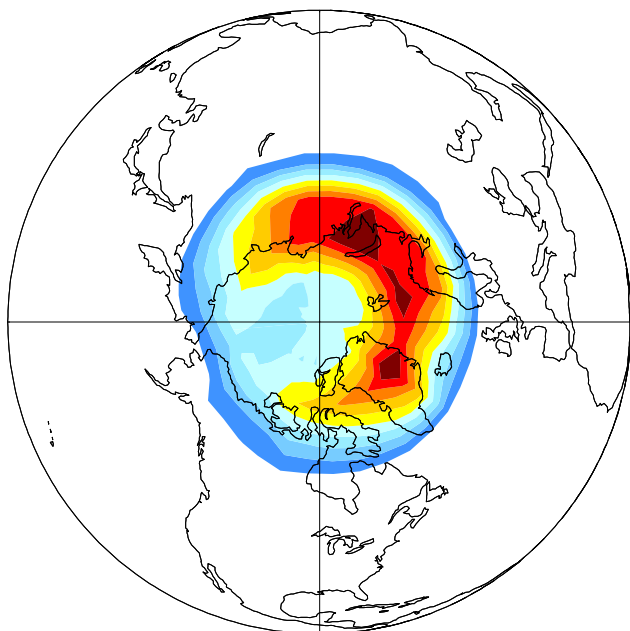
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Ozone loss (DU), September 2010–2019



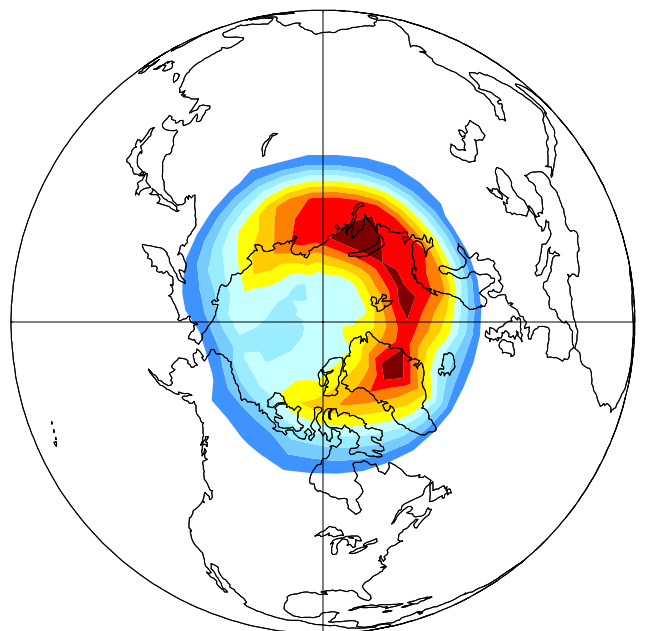
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Ozone loss (%), March 2010–2019

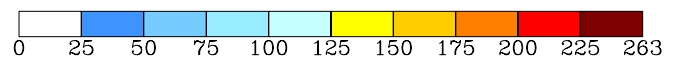
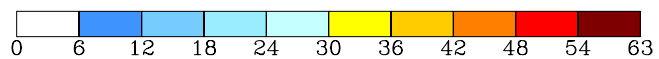


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Ozone loss (DU), March 2010–2019



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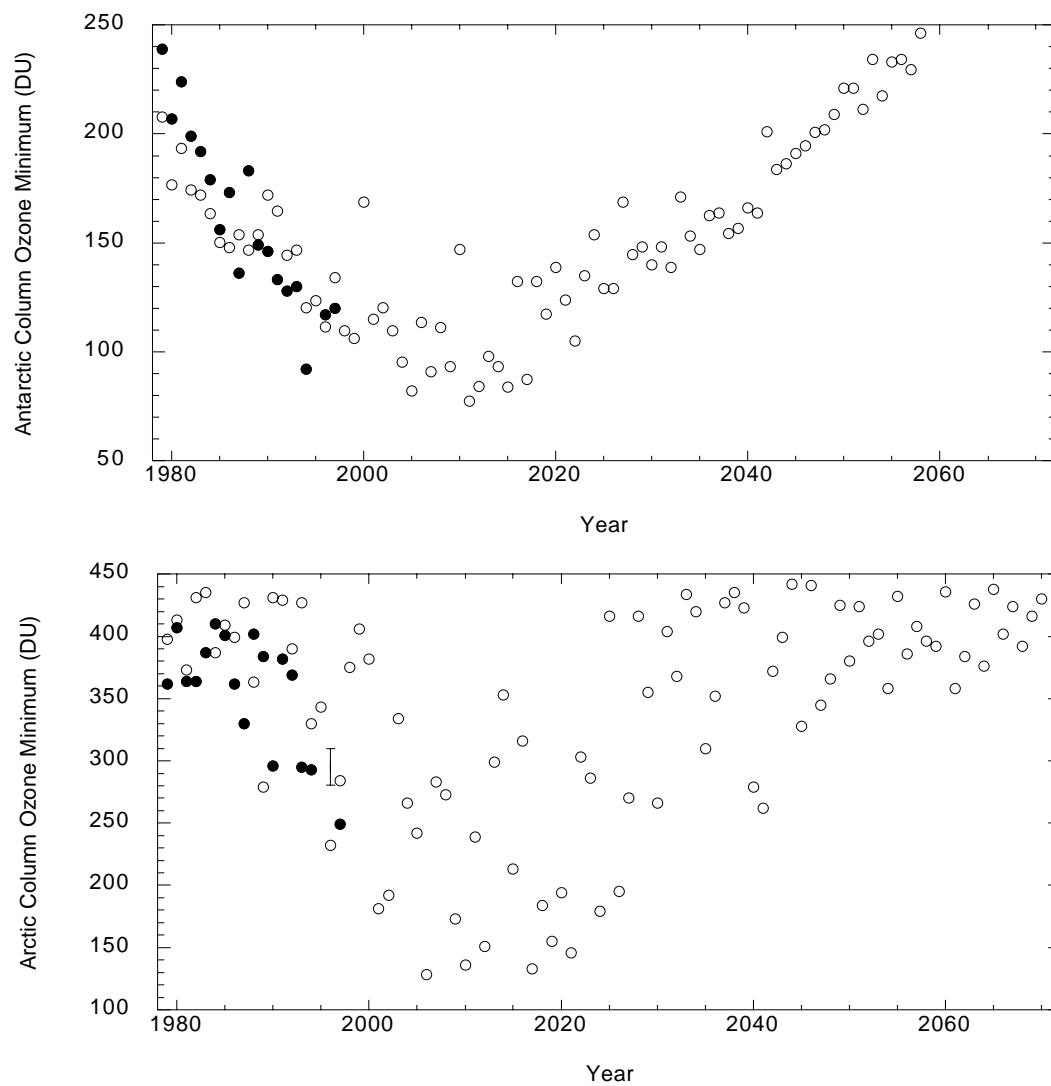


Figure 4